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MRS. EDDY IN ERROR.*

BY MARK TWAIN.

I FEEL almost sure that Mrs. Eddy's inspiration-works are getting out of repair. I think so because they made some errors in a statement which she uttered through the press on the 17th of January. Not large ones, perhaps, still it is a friend's duty to straighten such things out and get them right when he can. Therefore I will put my other duties aside for a moment and undertake this helpful service. She said as follows:

"In view of the circulation of certain criticisms from the pen of Mark Twain, I submit the following statement:

"It is a fact, well understood, that I begged the students who first gave me the endearing appellative 'mother' not to name me thus. But, without my consent, that word spread like wildfire. I still must think the name is not applicable to me. I stand in relation to this century as a Christian discoverer, founder, and leader. I regard self-deification as blasphemous; I may be more loved, but I am less lauded, pampered, provided for, and cheered than others before me—and wherefore? Because Christian Science is not yet popular, and I refuse adulation.

"My visit to the Mother Church after it was built and dedicated pleased me, and the situation was satisfactory. The dear members wanted to greet me with escort and the ringing of bells, but I declined, and went alone in my carriage to the church, entered it, and knelt in thanks upon the steps of its altar. There the foresplendor of the beginnings of truth fell mysteriously upon my spirit. I believe in one Christ, teach one Christ, know of but one Christ. I believe in but one incarnation, one Mother Mary, and know I am not that one, and never claimed to be. It suffices me to learn the Science of the Scriptures relative to this subject.

"Christian Scientists have no quarrel with Protestants, Catholics, or any other sect. They need to be understood as following the divine Principle—God, Love—and not imagined to be unscientific worshippers of a human being.

"In the aforesaid article, of which I have seen only extracts, Mark

* Copyright, 1903, by S. L. Clemens.

Twain's wit was not wasted in certain directions. Christian Science eschews divine rights in human beings. If the individual governed human consciousness, my statement of Christian Science would be disproved, but to understand the spiritual idea is essential to demonstrate Science and its pure monotheism—one God, one Christ, no idolatry, no human propaganda. Jesus taught and proved that what feeds a few feeds all. His life-work subordinated the material to the spiritual, and he left this legacy of truth to mankind. His metaphysics is not the sport of philosophy, religion, or Science; rather it is the pith and finale of them all.

"I have not the inspiration or aspiration to be a first or second Virgin-Mother—her duplicate, antecedent or subsequent. What I am remains to be proved by the good I do. We need much humility, wisdom, and love to perform the functions of foreshadowing and foretasting heaven within us. This glory is molten in the furnace of affliction."

She still thinks the name of Our Mother not applicable to her; and she is also able to remember that it distressed her when it was conferred upon her, and that she begged to have it suppressed. Her memory is at fault here. If she will take her By-laws, and refer to Section 1 of Article XXII., written with her own hand—she will find that she has reserved that title to herself, and is so pleased with it, and so—may we say jealous?—about it, that she threatens with excommunication any sister Scientist who shall call herself by it. This is that Section 1:

"The Title of Mother. In the year 1895 loyal Christian Scientists had given to the author of their text-book, the Founder of Christian Science, the individual, endearing term of Mother. Therefore, if a student of Christian Science shall apply this title, either to herself or to others, except as the term for kinship according to the flesh, it shall be regarded by the Church as an indication of disrespect for their Pastor Emeritus, and unfitness to be a member of the Mother Church."

Mrs. Eddy is herself the Mother Church—its powers and authorities are in her possession solely—and she can abolish that title whenever it may please her to do so. She has only to command her people, wherever they may be in the earth, to use it no more, and it will never be uttered again. She is aware of this.

It may be that she "refuses adulation" when she is not awake, but when she is awake she encourages it and propagates it in that museum called "Our Mother's Room," in her Church in Boston. She could abolish that institution with a word, if she wanted to. She is aware of that. I will say a further word about the museum presently.

Further down the column, her memory is unfaithful again:

"I believe in . . . but one Mother Mary, and know I am not that one, and never claimed to be."

At a session of the National Christian Science Association, held in the city of New York on the 27th of May, 1890, the secretary was "instructed to send to our Mother greetings and words of affection from her assembled children."*

Her telegraphic response was read to the Association at next day's meeting:

"All hail! He hath filled the hungry with good things and the sick hath He not sent empty away.—MOTHER MARY."†

Which Mother Mary is this one? Are there two? If so, she is both of them; for, when she signed this telegram in this satisfied and unprotesting way, the Mother-title which she was going to so strenuously object to, and put from her with humility, and seize with both hands, and reserve as her sole property, and protect her monopoly of it with a stern By-Law, while recognizing with diffidence that it was "not applicable" to her (then and to-day),—*that* Mother-title was not yet born, and would not be offered to her until five years later. The date of the above "Mother Mary" is 1890; the "individual, endearing title of Mother" was given her "in 1895"—according to her own testimony. See her By-Law, quoted above.

In his opening Address to that Convention of 1890, the President recognized this Mary—our Mary—and abolished all previous ones. He said:

"There was but one Moses, one Jesus; and there is but one Mary."‡

There had *been* a Moses at one time, and only one; there had *been* a Jesus at one time, and only one; there *is* a Mary and "only one." She is not a Has Been, she is an Is—the "Author of Science and Health; and we cannot ignore her."§

The confusions being now dispersed, we have this clarified result:

1. In 1890, there was but one Mother Mary. The President said so.

2. Mrs. Eddy was that one. She said so, in signing the telegram.

* Page 24, Official Report.

‡ Page 13, Official Report.

† Page 24, Official Report.

§ Page 13, Official Report.

3. Mrs. Eddy was not that one—for she says so, in her Associated Press utterance of January 17th.

4. And has “never claimed to be” that one—unless the signature to the telegram is a claim.

Thus it stands proven and established that she is that Mary and isn’t, and thought she was and knows she wasn’t. That much is clear.

She is also “The Mother,” by the election of 1895, and did not want the title, and thinks it is not applicable to her, and will excommunicate any one that tries to take it away from her. So that is clear.

I think that the only really troublesome confusion connected with these particular matters has arisen from the name—Mary. Much vexation, much misunderstanding, could have been avoided if Mrs. Eddy had used some of her other names in place of that one. “Mother Mary” was certain to stir up discussion. It would have been much better if she had signed the telegram “Mother Baker”; then there would have been no Biblical competition, and, of course, that is a thing to avoid. But it is not too late, yet.

I wish to break in here with a parenthesis, and then take up this examination of Mrs. Eddy’s Claim* of January 17th again.

The history of her “Mother Mary” telegram—as told to me by one who ought to be a very good authority—is curious and interesting. The telegram ostensibly quotes verse 53 from the “Magnificat,” but really makes some pretty formidable changes in it. This is St. Luke’s version:

“He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the *rich* he hath sent empty away.”

This is “Mother Mary’s” telegraphed version:

“He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the *sick* hath He *not* sent empty away.”†

To judge by the Official Report, the bursting of this bombshell in that massed convention of trained Christians created no astonishment, since it caused no remark, and the business of the

* “*Claim.*” In Christian Science terminology, “Claims” are errors of mortal mind, fictions of the imagination.

† Page 24, Official Report.

convention went tranquilly on, thereafter, as if nothing had happened.

Did those people detect those changes? We cannot know. I think they must have noticed them, the wording of St. Luke's verse being as familiar to all Christians as is the wording of the Beatitudes; and I think that the reason the new version provoked no surprise and no comment was, that the assemblage took it for a "Key"—a spiritualized explanation of verse 53, newly sent down from heaven through Mrs. Eddy. For all Scientists study their Bibles diligently, and they know their Magnificat. I believe that their confidence in the authenticity of Mrs. Eddy's inspirations is so limitless and so firmly established that no change, however violent, which she might make in a Bible text could disturb their composure or provoke from them a protest.

Her improved rendition of verse 53 went into the convention's report and appeared in a New York paper the next day. The (at that time) Scientist whom I mentioned a minute ago, and who had not been present at the convention, saw it and marvelled; marvelled and was indignant—indignant with the printer or the telegrapher, for making so careless and so dreadful an error. And greatly distressed, too; for, of course, the newspaper people would fall foul of it, and be sarcastic, and make fun of it and have a blithe time over it, and be properly thankful for the chance. It shows how innocent he was; it shows that he did not know the limitations of newspaper men in the matter of Biblical knowledge. The new verse 53 raised no insurrection in the press; in fact, it was not even remarked upon; I could have told him the boys would not know there was anything the matter with it. I have been a newspaper man myself, and in those days I had my limitations like the others.

The Scientist hastened to Concord and told Mrs. Eddy what a disastrous mistake had been made, but he found to his bewilderment that she was tranquil about it, and was not proposing to correct it. He was not able to get her to promise to make a correction. He asked her secretary if he had heard aright when the telegram was dictated to him; the secretary said he had, and took the filed copy of it and verified its authenticity by comparing it with the stenographic notes.

Mrs. Eddy did make the correction, two months later, in her official organ. It attracted no attention among the Scientists;

and, naturally, none elsewhere, for that periodical's circulation was practically confined to disciples of the cult.

That is the tale as it was told to me by an ex-Scientist. Verse 53—renovated and spiritualized—had a narrow escape from a tremendous celebrity. The newspaper men would have made it as famous as the assassination of Cæsar, but for their limitations.

To return to the Claim. I find myself greatly embarrassed by Mrs. Eddy's remark: "I regard self-deification as blasphemous." If she is right about that, I have written a half-ream of manuscript this past week which I must not print, either in the book which I am writing, or elsewhere: for it goes into that very matter with extensive elaboration, citing, in detail, words and acts of Mrs. Eddy's which seem to me to prove that she is a faithful and untiring worshipper of herself, and has carried self-deification to a length which has not before been ventured in ages. If ever. There is not room enough in this magazine for that Survey, but I can epitomize a portion of it here.

With her own untaught and untrained mind, and without outside help, she has erected upon a firm and lasting foundation the most minutely perfect, and wonderful, and smoothly and exactly working, and best safe-guarded system of government that has yet been devised in the world, as I believe, and as I am sure I could prove if I had room for my documentary evidences here.

It is a despotism (on this democratic soil); a sovereignty more absolute than the Roman Papacy, more absolute than the Russian Czarship; it has not a single power, not a shred of authority, legislative or executive, which is not lodged solely in the sovereign; all its dreams, its functions, its energies, have a single object, a single reason for existing, and only the one—to build to the sky the glory of the sovereign, and keep it bright to the end of time.

Mrs. Eddy is the sovereign; she devised that great place for herself, she occupies that throne.

In 1895, she wrote a little primer, a little body of autocratic laws, called the "Manual of The First Church of Christ, Scientist," and put those laws in force, in permanence. Her government is all there; all in that deceptively innocent-looking little book, that cunning little devilish book, that slumbering little brown volcano, with hell in its bowels. In that book she has planned out her system, and classified and defined its purposes and powers.

MAIN PARTS OF THE MACHINE.

A Supreme Church. At Boston.

Branch Churches. All over the world.

One Pastor for the whole of them: to wit, her book, "Science and Health." Term of the book's office—*forever*.

In every C. S. pulpit, two "Readers," a man and a woman. *No talkers, no preachers, in any Church*—readers only. *Readers of the Bible and her books*—no others. No commentators allowed to write or print.

A Church Service. She has framed it,—for all the C. S. Churches—selected its readings, its prayers, and the hymns to be used, and has appointed the order of procedure. No changes permitted.

A Creed. She wrote it. All C. S. Churches must subscribe to it. No other permitted.

A Treasury. At Boston. She carries the key.

A C. S. Book-Publishing House. For books approved by her. No others permitted.

Journals and Magazines. These are organs of hers, and are controlled by her.

A College. For teaching C. S.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE MACHINE'S POWERS AND DIGNITIES.

Supreme Church.

Pastor Emeritus—Mrs. Eddy.

Board of Directors.

Board of Education.

Board of Finance.

College Faculty.

Various Committees.

Treasurer.

Clerk.

First Members (of the Supreme Church).

Members of the Supreme Church.

It looks fair, it looks real, but it is all a fiction. Even the title "Pastor Emeritus" is a fiction. Instead of being merely an honorary and ornamental official, Mrs. Eddy is the only official in the entire body that has the slightest power. In her Manual, she has provided a prodigality of ways and forms whereby she can rid herself of any functionary in the government whenever she wants to. The officials are all shadows, save herself; she is the

only reality. She allows no one to hold office more than a year—no one gets a chance to become over-popular or over-useful, and dangerous. “Excommunication” is the favorite penalty—it is threatened at every turn. It is evidently the pet dread and terror of the Church’s membership.

The member who *thinks*, without getting his thought from Mrs. Eddy before uttering it, is banished *permanently*. One or two kinds of sinners can plead their way back into the fold, but this one, never. To *think*—in the Supreme Church—is the New Unpardonable Sin.

To nearly every severe and fierce rule, Mrs. Eddy adds this rivet: “*This By-Law shall not be changed without the consent of the Pastor Emeritus.*”

Mrs. Eddy is the entire Supreme Church, in her own person, in the matter of powers and authorities.

Although she has provided so many ways of getting rid of unsatisfactory members and officials, she was still afraid she might have left a life-preserver lying around somewhere, therefore she devised a rule to cover that defect. By applying it, she can excommunicate (and *this* is perpetual again) every functionary connected with the Supreme Church, and every one of the 25,000 members of that Church, at an hour’s notice—and *do it all by herself without anybody’s help*.

By authority of this astonishing By-Law, she has only to *say* a person connected with that Church is secretly practising hypnotism or mesmerism: whereupon, immediate excommunication, without a hearing, is his portion! She does not have to order a trial and produce evidence—her *accusation* is all that is necessary.

Where is the Pope? and where the Czar? As the ballad says:

“Ask of the winds that far away
With fragments strewed the sea.”

The Branch Church’s pulpit is occupied by two “Readers.” Without them the Branch Church is as dead as if its throat had been cut. To have control, then, of the Readers, is to have control of the Branch Churches. Mrs. Eddy has that control—a control wholly without limit, a control shared with no one.

1. No Reader can be appointed to any Church in the Christian Science world without her *express* approval.

2. She can summarily expel from his or her place any Reader,

at home or abroad, by a mere *letter* of dismissal, over her signature, and without furnishing any reason for it, to either the congregation or the Reader.

Thus she has as absolute control over all Branch Churches as she has over the Supreme Church. This power exceeds the Pope's.

In simple truth, *she is the only absolute sovereign in all Christendom*. The authority of the other sovereigns has limits, hers has none. None whatever. And her yoke does not fret, does not offend. Many of the subjects of the other monarchs feel their yoke, and are restive under it; their loyalty is insincere. It is not so with this one's human property; their loyalty is genuine, earnest, sincere, enthusiastic. The sentiment which they feel for her is one which goes out in sheer perfection to no other occupant of a throne; for it is love, pure from doubt, envy, exaction, fault-seeking, a love whose sun has no spot—that form of love, strong, great, uplifting, limitless, whose vast proportions are compassable by no word but one, the prodigious word, *Worship*. And it is not as a human being that her subjects worship her, but as a supernatural one, a divine one, one who has comradeship with God, and speaks by His voice.

Mrs. Eddy has herself created all these personal grandeurs and autocracies—with others which I have not (in this article) mentioned. They place her upon an Alpine solitude and supremacy of power and spectacular show not hitherto attained by any other self-seeking enslaver disguised in the Christian name, and they persuade me that, although she may regard “self-deification as blasphemous,” she is as fond of it as I am of pie.

She knows about “Our Mother's Room” in the Supreme Church in Boston,—above referred to—for she has been in it. In a recently published NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW article (written four years ago), I quoted a lady as saying Mrs. Eddy's portrait could be seen there in a shrine, lit by always-burning lights, and that C. S. disciples came there and worshipped it. That remark hurt the feelings of more than one Scientist. They said it was not true, and asked me to correct it. I comply with pleasure. Whether the portrait was there four years ago or not, it is not there now, for I have inquired. The only object in the shrine now, and lit by electrics,—and worshipped,—is an oil portrait of the horse-hair chair Mrs. Eddy used to sit in when she was writing “Science and Health!” It seems to me that adulation has struck bottom, here.

Mrs. Eddy knows about that. She has been there, she has seen it, she has seen the worshippers. She could abolish that sarcasm with a word. She withholds the word. Once more I seem to recognize in her exactly the same appetite for self-deification that I have for pie. We seem to be curiously alike; for the love of self-deification is really only the spiritual form of the material appetite for pie, and nothing could be more strikingly Christian-Scientifically "harmonious."

I note this phrase:

"Christian Science eschews divine rights in human beings."

"Rights" is vague; I do not know what it means there. Mrs. Eddy is not well acquainted with the English language, and she is seldom able to say in it what she is trying to say. She has no ear for the exact word, and does not often get it. "Rights." Does she mean "honors?" "attributes?"

"Eschews." This is another umbrella where there should be a torch; it does not illumine the sentence, it only deepens the shadows. Does she mean "denies?" "refuses?" "forbids?"—or something in that line? Does she mean:

"Christian Science denies divine honors to human beings?"

Or:

"Christian Science refuses to recognize divine attributes in human beings?" Or:

"Christian Science forbids the worship of human beings?"

The bulk of the succeeding sentence is to me a tunnel, but, when I emerge at this end of it, I seem to come into daylight. Then I seem to understand both sentences—with this result:

"Christian Science recognizes but one God, forbids the worship of human beings, and refuses to recognize the possession of divine attributes by any member of the race."

I am subject to correction, but I think that that is about what Mrs. Eddy was intending to convey. Has her English—which is always difficult to me—beguiled me into misunderstanding the following remark, which she makes (calling herself "we," after an old regal fashion of hers) in her preface to her "Miscellaneous Writings" ?*

"While we entertain decided views as to the best method for elevating the race physically, morally, and spiritually, and shall

express these views as duty demands, we shall claim no especial gift from our divine origin, no supernatural power."

Was she meaning to say:

"Although I am of divine origin and gifted with supernatural power, I shall not draw upon these resources in determining the best method of elevating the race?"

If she had left out the word "our," she might then seem to say:

"I claim no especial or unusual degree of divine origin—"

Which is awkward—most awkward; for one either has *a* divine origin or hasn't; shares in it, degrees of it, are surely impossible. The idea of crossed breeds in cattle is a thing we can entertain, for we are used to it, and it is possible; but the idea of a divine mongrel is unthinkable.

Well, then, what does she mean? I am sure I do not know, for certain. It is the word "our" that makes all the trouble. With the "our" in, she is plainly saying "*my* divine origin." The word "from" seems to be intended to mean "on account of." It has to mean that or nothing, if "our" is allowed to stay. The clause then says:

"I shall claim no especial gift on account of my divine origin."

And I think that the full sentence was intended to mean what I have already suggested:

"Although I am of divine origin, and gifted with supernatural power, I shall not draw upon these resources in determining the best method of elevating the race."

When Mrs. Eddy copyrighted that Preface seven years ago, she had long been used to regarding herself as a divine personage. I quote from Mr. F. W. Peabody's book:*

"In the 'Christian Science Journal' for April, 1889, when it was her property, and published by her, it was claimed for her, and *with her sanction*, that she was equal with Jesus, and elaborate effort was made to establish the claim."

"Mrs. Eddy has distinctly *authorized* the claim in her behalf, that she herself was the chosen successor to and equal of Jesus."

The following remark in that April number, quoted by Mr. Peabody, indicates that the claim had been previously made, and had excited "horror" among some "good people":

* Boston: 15 Court Square.

"Now, a word about the horror many good people have of our making the Author of 'Science and Health' 'equal with Jesus.'"

Surely, if it had excited horror in Mrs. Eddy also, she would have published a disclaimer. She owned the paper; she could say what she pleased in its columns. Instead of rebuking her editor, she lets him rebuke those "good people" for objecting to the claim.

These things seem to throw light upon those words, "our [my] divine origin."

It may be that "Christian Science eschews divine rights in human beings," and forbids worship of any but "one God, one Christ;" but, if that is the case, it looks as if Mrs. Eddy is a very unsound Christian Scientist, and needs disciplining. I believe she has a serious malady—"self-deification"; and that it will be well to have one of the experts demonstrate over it.

Meantime, let her go on living—for my sake. Closely examined, painstakingly studied, she is easily the most interesting person on the planet, and, in several ways, as easily the most extraordinary woman that was ever born upon it.

MARK TWAIN.

P. S.—Since I wrote the foregoing, Mr. McCrackan's article has appeared (in the last number of this REVIEW). Before his article appeared—that is to say, during December, January, and February—I had written a new book, a character-portrait of Mrs. Eddy, drawn from her own acts and words, and it was then—together with the three brief articles previously published in the REVIEW—ready to be delivered to the printer for issue in book form. In that book, by accident and good luck, I have answered the objections made by Mr. McCrackan to my views, and therefore do not need to add an answer here. Also, in it I have corrected certain misstatements of mine which he has noticed, and several others which he has not referred to. There are one or two important matters of opinion upon which he and I are not in disagreement; but there are others upon which we must continue to disagree, I suppose; indeed, I know we must; for instance, he believes Mrs. Eddy wrote "Science and Health," whereas I am quite sure I can convince a person unhampered by predilections that she did not.

As concerns one considerable matter I hope to convert him.

He believes Mrs. Eddy's word; in his article he cites her as a witness, and takes her testimony at par; but if he will make an excursion through my book when it comes out, and will dispassionately examine her testimonies as there accumulated, I think he will in candor concede that she is by a large percentage the most erratic and contradictory and untrustworthy witness that has occupied the stand since the days of the lamented Ananias.

M. T.